

# News Analysts, Reporters, and Correspondents

(0\*NET 27-3021.00, 27-3022.00)

## Significant Points

- Most employers prefer experienced individuals with a bachelor's degree in journalism or mass communications.
- Competition will be keen for jobs at large metropolitan and national newspapers, broadcast stations, and magazines; most entry-level openings arise at small broadcast stations and publications.
- Jobs often involve irregular hours, night and weekend work, and pressure to meet deadlines.

## Nature of the Work

News analysts, reporters, and correspondents play a key role in our society. They gather information, prepare stories, and make broadcasts that inform us about local, State, national, and international events; present points of view on current issues; and report on the actions of public officials, corporate executives, special-interest groups, and others who exercise power.

News analysts examine, interpret, and broadcast news received from various sources. They also are called *newscasters* or *news anchors*. News anchors present news stories and introduce videotaped news or live transmissions from on-the-scene reporters. Some newscasters at large stations and networks specialize in a particular type of news, such as sports or weather. *Weathercasters*, also called weather reporters, report current and forecasted weather conditions. They gather information from national satellite weather services, wire services, and local and regional weather bureaus. Some weathercasters are trained meteorologists and can develop their own weather forecasts. (See the statement on atmospheric scientists elsewhere in the *Handbook*.) *Sportscasters* select, write, and deliver sports news. This may include interviews with sports personalities and coverage of games and other sporting events.

In covering a story, *reporters* investigate leads and news tips, look at documents, observe events at the scene, and interview people. Reporters take notes and also may take photographs or shoot videos. At their office, they organize the material, determine the focus or emphasis, write their stories, and edit accompanying video material. Many reporters enter information or write stories on laptop computers, and electronically submit the material to their offices from remote locations. In some cases, *newswriters* write a story from information collected and submitted by reporters. Radio and television reporters often compose stories and report "live" from the scene. At times, they later tape an introduction to or commentary on their story in the studio. Some journalists also interpret the news or offer opinions to readers, viewers, or listeners. In this role, they are called *commentators* or *columnists*.

General assignment reporters write about newsworthy occurrences, such as an accident, a political rally, the visit of a celebrity, or a company going out of business, as assigned. Large newspapers and radio and television stations assign reporters to gather news about specific topics or "beats," such as crime or education. Some reporters specialize in fields such as health, politics, foreign affairs, sports, theater, consumer affairs, social

events, science, business, or religion. Investigative reporters cover stories that may take many days or weeks of information gathering. Some publications use teams of reporters instead of assigning specific beats, allowing reporters to cover a greater variety of stories. News teams may include reporters, editors, graphic artists, and photographers, working together to complete a story.

News *correspondents* report on news occurring in the large U.S. and foreign cities where they are stationed. Reporters on small publications cover all aspects of the news. They take photographs, write headlines, lay out pages, edit wire service stories, and write editorials. Some also solicit advertisements, sell subscriptions, and perform general office work.

## Working Conditions

The work of news analysts, reporters, and correspondents is usually hectic. They are under great pressure to meet deadlines. Broadcasts sometimes are made with little or no time for preparation. Some news analysts, reporters, and correspondents work in comfortable, private offices; others work in large rooms filled with the sound of keyboards and computer printers, as well as the voices of other reporters. Curious onlookers, police, or other emergency workers can distract those reporting from the scene for radio and television. Covering wars, political uprisings, fires, floods, and similar events is often dangerous.

Working hours vary. Reporters on morning papers often work from late afternoon until midnight. Radio and television reporters usually are assigned to a day or evening shift. Magazine reporters usually work during the day.

Reporters sometimes have to change their work hours to meet a deadline, or to follow late-breaking developments. Their work demands long hours, irregular schedules, and some travel. Many stations and networks are on the air 24 hours a day, so newscasters can expect to work unusual hours.

## Employment

News analysts, reporters, and correspondents held about 66,000 jobs in 2002. About 60 percent worked for newspaper, periodical, book, and directory publishers. Another 25 percent worked in radio and television broadcasting. About 4,100 news analysts, reporters, and correspondents were self-employed.



Reporters often travel to sporting events.

## Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Most employers prefer individuals with a bachelor's degree in journalism or mass communications, but some hire graduates with other majors. They look for experience on school newspapers or broadcasting stations and internships with news organizations. Large-city newspapers and stations also may prefer candidates with a degree in a subject-matter specialty such as economics, political science, or business. Some large newspapers and broadcasters may hire only experienced reporters.

Bachelor's degree programs in journalism are available at more than 400 colleges or universities. About three-fourths of the courses in a typical curriculum are in liberal arts; the remaining courses are in journalism. Examples of journalism courses are introductory mass media, basic reporting and copy editing, history of journalism, and press law and ethics. Students planning a career in broadcasting take courses in radio and television news and production. Those planning newspaper or magazine careers usually specialize in news-editorial journalism. To create a story for an online presentation, they need to know how to use computer software to combine online story text with audio and video elements and graphics.

Many community and junior colleges offer journalism courses or programs; credits may be transferable to 4-year journalism programs. About 120 schools offered a master's degree in journalism in 2002; about 35 schools offered a Ph.D. degree. Some graduate programs are intended primarily as preparation for news careers, while others prepare journalism teachers, researchers and theorists, and advertising and public relations workers.

High school courses in English, journalism, and social studies provide a good foundation for college programs. Useful college liberal arts courses include English with an emphasis on writing, sociology, political science, economics, history, and psychology. Courses in computer science, business, and speech are useful as well. Fluency in a foreign language is necessary in some jobs.

Although reporters need good word processing skills, computer graphics and desktop publishing skills also are useful. Computer-assisted reporting involves the use of computers to analyze data in search of a story. This technique and the interpretation of the results require computer skills and familiarity with databases. Knowledge of news photography also is valuable for entry-level positions, which sometimes combine the responsibilities of a reporter with those of a camera operator or photographer.

Employers report that practical experience is the most important part of education and training. Upon graduation many students have already gained much practical experience through part-time or summer jobs or through internships with news organizations. Most newspapers, magazines, and broadcast news organizations offer reporting and editing internships. Work on high school and college newspapers, at broadcasting stations, or on community papers or U.S. Armed Forces publications also provides practical training. In addition, journalism scholarships, fellowships, and assistantships awarded to college journalism students by universities, newspapers, foundations, and professional organizations are helpful. Experience as a stringer or freelancer—a part-time reporter who is paid only for stories printed—is advantageous.

Reporters should be dedicated to providing accurate and impartial news. Accuracy is important, both to serve the public and because untrue or libelous statements can lead to lawsuits.

A nose for news, persistence, initiative, poise, resourcefulness, a good memory, and physical stamina are important, as is the emotional stability to deal with pressing deadlines, irregular hours, and dangerous assignments. Broadcast reporters and news analysts must be comfortable on camera. All reporters must be at ease in unfamiliar places and with a variety of people. Positions involving on-air work require a pleasant voice and appearance.

Most reporters start at small publications or broadcast stations as general assignment reporters or copy editors. Large publications and stations hire few recent graduates; as a rule, they require new reporters to have several years of experience.

Beginning reporters cover court proceedings and civic and club meetings, summarize speeches, and write obituaries. With experience, they report more difficult assignments, cover an assigned beat, or specialize in a particular field.

Some news analysts and reporters can advance by moving to larger newspapers or stations. A few experienced reporters become columnists, correspondents, writers, announcers, or public relations specialists. Others become editors in print journalism or program managers in broadcast journalism, who supervise reporters. Some eventually become broadcasting or publishing industry managers.

## Job Outlook

Employment of news analysts, reporters, and correspondents is expected to grow more slowly than the average for all occupations through the year 2012—the result of mergers, consolidations, and closures of newspapers; decreased circulation; increased expenses; and a decline in advertising profits. In addition to consolidation of local newspaper and television and radio station ownership, increasing competition for viewers from cable networks also should limit employment growth. Some job growth is expected in new media areas, such as online newspapers and magazines. Job openings also will result from the need to replace workers who leave their occupations permanently. Some news analysts, reporters, and correspondents find the work too stressful and hectic or do not like the lifestyle, and transfer to other occupations.

Most opportunities will be with smalltown and suburban newspapers and radio and television stations. Competition will continue to be keen for more sought-after jobs on large metropolitan and national newspapers, broadcast stations and networks, and magazines. Talented writers who can handle highly specialized scientific or technical subjects have an advantage. Also, newspapers increasingly are hiring stringers and freelancers.

Journalism graduates have the background for work in closely related fields such as advertising and public relations, and many take jobs in these fields. Other graduates accept sales, managerial, or other nonmedia positions.

The number of job openings in the newspaper and broadcasting industries—in which news analysts, reporters, and correspondents are employed—is sensitive to economic ups and downs, because these industries depend on advertising revenue.

## Earnings

Salaries for news analysts, reporters, and correspondents vary widely. Median annual earnings of news analysts, reporters, and correspondents were \$30,510 in 2002. The middle 50 percent earned between \$22,350 and \$47,170. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$17,620, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$69,450. Median annual earnings of news analysts,

reporters, and correspondents were \$33,320 in radio and television broadcasting and \$29,090 in newspaper, periodical, book, and directory publishers in 2002.

### **Related Occupations**

News analysts, reporters, and correspondents must write clearly and effectively to succeed in their profession. Others for whom good writing ability is essential include writers and editors, and public relations specialists. Many news analysts, reporters, and correspondents also must communicate information orally. Others for whom oral communication skills are important are announcers, interpreters and translators, sales and related occupations, and teachers.

### **Sources of Additional Information**

For information on broadcasting education and scholarship resources, contact:

► National Association of Broadcasters, 1771 N St. NW., Washington, DC 20036. Internet: <http://www.nab.org>

Information on careers in journalism, colleges and universities offering degree programs in journalism or communications, and journalism scholarships and internships may be obtained from:

► Dow Jones Newspaper Fund, Inc., P.O. Box 300, Princeton, NJ 08543-0300.

Information on union wage rates for newspaper and magazine reporters is available from:

► Newspaper Guild, Research and Information Department, 501 3rd St. NW., Suite 250, Washington, DC 20001.

For a list of schools with accredited programs in journalism and mass communications, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to:

► Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, University of Kansas School of Journalism and Mass Communications, Stauffer-Flint Hall, 1435 Jayhawk Blvd., Lawrence, KS 66045. Internet: <http://www.ku.edu/~acejmc/STUDENT/STUDENT.SHTML>

Names and locations of newspapers and a list of schools and departments of journalism are published in the *Editor and Publisher International Year Book*, available in most public libraries and newspaper offices.